

Message Text

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P 281758Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6130

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 20631

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CVIS, PINT, CSCE, UR, US
SUBJECT: PENTECOSTALISTS AND ARMENIANS: CURRENT
MOOD AND AVAILABLE OPTIONS

1. OUR CONSIDERATION OF NEXT STEPS IN HANDLING THE VASHCHENKO GROUP AND MRS. OVSEPYAN AND HER CHILDREN SHOULD OF COURSE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PRESENT STATE OF MIND OF VASHCHENKO AND OVSEPYAN. CONVERSATIONS WITH THEM IN THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS INDICATE THAT VASHCHENKO IS BECOMING MORE STUBBORN AND DEFIANT, WHILE OVSEPYAN CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT SHE WILL NOT LEAVE THE EMBASSY UNTIL SHE HAS SOVIET PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE TO THE U. S.

2. EMBOFFS HAVE FOUND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO REASON WITH VASHCHENKO, WHO IS EMOTIONAL, DEEPLY RELIGIOUS AND DEEPLY CONVINCED OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF HIS POSITION. THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS, WHILE NOT ALWAYS MUTUALLY CONSISTENT, SEEM CENTRAL TO HIS PRESENT STATE OF MIND:

-- THE EMBASSY ESSENTIALLY HAS DONE NOTHING FOR HIS GROUP, OTHER THAN TO PROVIDE SHELTER AND FOOD;
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-- THE EMBASSY IS WITHHOLDING MAIL ADDRESSED TO THEM (WE HAVE TWO LETTERS FROM THE U.S. WITH MONEY ENCLOSED; WE ARE HOLDING THEM FOR THE PRESENT, BUT EVENTUALLY WILL RETURN THEM TO THE SENDERS;
-- THE USG IS CAPABLE OF ENSURING THE EMIGRATION OF SOVIET CHRISTIANS TO CHRISTIAN COUNTRIES, AND IS OBLIGATED TO DO SO (JUST AS IT DOES, ACCORDING TO

VASHCHENKO, FOR SOVIET JEWS EMIGRATING TO ISRAEL);
-- THE LORD WILL HELP VASHCHENKO AND THE OTHERS IN
HIS GROUP, BUT ONLY IF THEY STAY IN THE EMBASSY;
-- HE IS SKEPTICAL OF WHAT THE EMBASSY TELLS HIM AND
HAS ABSOLUTELY NO FAITH IN WHAT THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT
SAYS;
-- IN PARTICULAR, NO MATTER WHAT SOVIET OFFICIALS
SAY, THEY WILL CERTAINLY SUBJECT VASHCHENKO AND THE
MEMBERS OF HIS GROUP TO A TERRIBLE FATE--LENGTHY
IMPRISONMENT AND PERHAPS DEATH--ONCE THEY FALL INTO
SOVIET HANDS;
-- VASHCHENKO AND THE OTHERS ARE PREPARED TO GO
WITHOUT FOOD AND TO DIE OF STARVATION RATHER THAN
VOLUNTARILY PLACE THEMSELVES IN SOVIET HANDS;
-- THEY DO NOT WANT TO IMPEDE THE EMBASSY'S OPERATIONS,
AND WOULD BE HAPPY TO MOVE OUT OF THE CONSULAR SECTION
TO ANOTHER PLACE IN THE EMBASSY;
-- IF THE EMBASSY FORCES THEM OUT, THEY WILL TELL
JOURNALISTS THAT THE EMBASSY WAS CRUEL AND HEARTLESS.

3. MRS. OVSEPYAN, WHO IS EVEN MORE EMOTIONAL THAN
VASHCHENKO, REPEATS TEARFULLY DURING VIRTUALLY
EVERY CONVERSATION WITH EMBASSY PERSONNEL THAT SHE
WILL DIE IN THE EMBASSY BEFORE LEAVING IT. SHE IN-
SISTS THAT SHE HAS NO HOME, NO ADDRESS IN THE SOVIET
UNION AND THEREFORE HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO LIVE IN THE
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EMBASSY UNTIL HER EMIGRATION CASE IS RESOLVED. HER
CHILDREN ARE TOO SMALL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HAPPENING.

4. IN LIGHT OF THE ABOVE, WE SEE THREE BROAD
OPTIONS, WITH SOME SUB-OPTIONS UNDER EACH, FOR
HANDLING THIS MATTER.

A. REMOVE THEM, USING MINIMUM NECESSARY FORCE:

(1) TAKE THEM TO THE GATE AND LEAVE THEM ON THE
STREET, WITH THE MILITIA PRESUMABLY TAKING
CUSTODY OF THEM SHOULD THEY REFUSE TO LEAVE THE
VICINITY OF THE EMBASSY.

(2) PLACE THEM ON AN EMBASSY BUS AND TAKE THEM
TO A PARK OR RAILROAD STATION, OR TO THE ALL-
UNION OVIR (EMIGRATION OFFICE), OR, ON GROUNDS
THAT MEDICAL ATTENTION WAS ADVISABLE, TO A
SOVIET HOSPITAL. THEY PROBABLY WOULD HAVE TO
BE CARRIED BOTH ON AND OFF THE BUS. THE LATTER
TWO DESTINATIONS WOULD REQUIRE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS
WITH SOVIET AUTHORITIES, WHO TO DATE HAVE NOT
BEEN COOPERATIVE.

B. ACCEPT THEIR PRESENCE AND MAKE LONG-TERM ARRANGEMENTS:

(1) KEEP THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS AUSTERE AND KEEP THEM ISOLATED; OR

(2) MAKE THEM AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL WHO WANT TO MEET THEM (A COURSE NO ONE HERE SUPPORTS).

C. PURSUE OPTIONS WHICH WOULD ALLOW THEM TO EMIGRATE:

(1) CONTINUE DIRECT REPRESENTATIONS TO THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MOSCOW 20631

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SOVIET GOVERNMENT, EVEN THOUGH THE SOVIETS HAVE NOT BEEN COOPERATIVE AND THE PENTECOSTALISTS HAVE NO FAITH IN SOVIET ASSURANCES;

(2) ENLIST NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PROMINENT PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS IN WESTERN EUROPE AS WELL AS THE U. S. TO MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO SOVIET CONTACTS;

(3) SEEK INVITATIONS FOR THE PENTECOSTALISTS AND THE ARMENIANS TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL(ON THE PRESUMPTION THE SOVIETS MIGHT FIND IT EASIER TO ALLOW THEM TO GO TO ISRAEL.)

5. IN VIEW OF THEIR EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO LEAVE THE CONSULAR SECTION, I HAVE DIRECTED THAT THIS EVENING THEY BE MOVED, PROVIDED THEY AGREE, TO AN EFFICIENCY APARTMENT IN THE SOUTH WING WHICH IS NORMALLY USED BY COURIERS FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS BUT

UNTIL TODAY WAS OCCUPIED BY ONE OF OUR COMMUNICATORS.
WHILE SMALL, IT IS SELF-CONTAINED. I BELIEVE THIS
STEP NECESSARY TO REMOVE THEM FROM JOURNALISTS AND
SUPPORTERS WHO UNDOUBTEDLY STRENGTHEN THEIR DETERMI-
NATION TO REMAIN.

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. FOR NOW, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD TAKE THE
COURSE OF MAINTAINING THEM IN AN ADEQUATE BUT RELATIVELY
AUSTERE EXISTENCE AND IN RELATIVE ISOLATION. IN
PRACTICE THIS WOULD MEAN THAT WE WOULD REGULARLY
PROVIDE FOOD SUPPLIES FOR THEM TO PREPARE THEIR OWN
MEANS, AND THAT NO ONE WOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE IN CON-
TACT WITH THEM EXCEPT THE PROTESTANT CHAPLAIN, WHO
WOULD CONTINUE HIS EFFORT TO PERSUADE THEM TO LEAVE
BY MEANS OF RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTATION. THEY WOULD BE
GIVEN BRIEF EXERCISE PERIODS IN THE FRESH AIR.

B. WE SHOULD AT THE SAME TIME BE GIVING CONSIDER-
ATION TO THE VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES SUGGESTED UNDER
OPTION A(2) IN PARA 4.

C. I DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD ACTIVELY PURSUE MEANS
OF PERMITTING THEIR EMIGRATION. IF, CONTRARY TO ALL
EXPECTATIONS, THEY WERE ALLOWED TO EMIGRATE DIRECTLY
FROM THEIR EMBASSY SANCTUARY, THERE WOULD BE NO END
TO THE INFLUX OF PROSPECTIVE EMIGRANTS--UNLESS WE
ARE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH THE SOVIETS IN PRO-
HIBITING FREE ACCESS BY SOVIETS TO THE EMBASSY.
NOR DO I SEE ANY PURPOSE TO BE SERVED BY APPROACHING
THE SOVIETS AGAIN. THE SOVIETS SEEM TO BE SATISFIED
WITH THE PRESENT SITUATION AND HAVE NO INCENTIVE FOR
HELPING US SOLVE A PROBLEM WHICH THEY BELIEVE FORCES
US TO RECONSIDER OUR POLICY OF DEMANDING FREE ACCESS
TO THE EMBASSY. TOON

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